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Testimony in Support of HB 2646: School Activities Leave
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Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 2646. One of the most important factors in a student's academic success is parental involvement. **Family Forward supports giving families the flexibility necessary to attend important school related activities, like parent-teacher conferences.**

Family Forward is committed to advancing policies that support families and help them succeed, both in the workplace and at home. Our mission is to create a family-friendly Oregon where all families can be economically secure and have the time it takes for work and family responsibilities. Today, too many families are forced to sacrifice one or the other. Family Forward supports policies, like school activities leave, that make economic stability and work-life balance more achievable for Oregon families.

One of the challenges working parents face is balancing work requirements and attendance at school functions such as parent-teacher conferences, school meetings, volunteer activities, and assemblies. Parental presence at school proves particularly tricky for employees at companies lacking flexible leave policies, which is often the case for many low-income parents. Low-wage workers have the least access to flexible schedules or short term leave. At the same time, children or low-income families tend to need greater educational support.

School activities leave, as envisioned in HB 2646, will provide parents with a modest eight hours of job-protected time away from the workplace each year to attend parent-teacher conferences or other school related events. While Family Forward supports this legislation, we do want to note that eight hours is likely insufficient for parents of more than one child or a child that has any sort of academic difficulty. Regardless, any kind of protected leave that enables more parental involvement will benefit students' academic success.

At least nine other states and the District of Columbia have enacted very similar laws to allow parents protected leave to attend school activities. Most are more generous than what is envisioned in HB 2646:¹

- California - Up to 40 hours per year, but no more than 8 hours per month, to participate in children's educational activities.
- DC - Up to 24 hours per year to participate in children's educational activities.

¹ NCSL <http://www.ncsl.org/research/labor-and-employment/state-family-and-medical-leave-laws.aspx>



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- Illinois - Up to 8 hours per school year, but no more than 4 hours on any day to attend a child's school activities, and only when no other type of employee leave is available.
- Louisiana - Up to 16 hours per year at the employer's discretion to participate in children's educational activities. Allows an employee to use any types of accrued leave to participate in his or her children's educational activities.
- Massachusetts - Up to 24 hours per year leave to participate in children's educational activities or accompany a child, spouse, or elderly relative to routine medical appointments, under the Small Necessities Leave Act.
- Minnesota - Up to 16 hours per year to participate in children's educational activities.
- Nevada - Makes it unlawful to terminate an employee for attending school conferences or for receiving notification of a child's emergency at work.
- North Carolina - Up to 4 hours per year to participate in children's educational activities.
- Rhode Island - Up to 10 hours per year to participate in children's educational activities
- Vermont - State family leave law provides an additional 24 hours in 12 months to attend to the routine or emergency medical needs of a child, spouse, parent, or parent-in-law or to participate in children's educational activities. Limits this leave to no more than 4 hours in any 30-day period.

We know that parental involvement in a child's education enhances academic achievement and reduces dropout rates. When students succeed in school, this success benefits not only the family, but our entire workforce and economy. No parent should be prevented from getting involved in their children's education because they fear losing their job simply for leaving work to care for their child's educational needs.

School activities leave is a common sense proposal that will increase parent involvement in education and improve children's academic success. Family Forward encourages support of HB 2646